Amateur Radio Newsline™ Report 1411 - August 27, 2004

Amateur Radio Newsline report number 1411 with a release date of Friday, August 27th, 2004 to follow in 5-4-3-2-1.

The following is a Q-S-T. A ham radio operator looses his house and tower in a fire and an urban terrorist is the suspect. Also, interference to a ham could lead to a fine for an uncooperative neighbor and lots happening on the B-P-L front. Find out the details on Amateur Radio Newsline report number 1411 coming your way right now.

(Billboard Cart Here)

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ALL POINTS BULLETIN: ARSONIST BURNS DOWN HAMS HOUSE

An arsonist with a grudge against radio has burned down the home of a Vancouver, Washington ham. Amateur Radio Newslines' Mark Abramowicz,
NT3V, has the details:

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A $10,000 reward is posted and the Clark County Fire Marshal's office is tracking any and all leads it hopes help them capture someone who has been setting fire to communications towers in the Vancouver area since the beginning of the month.

Until recently, investigators say the targets have primarily been state government, telephone company and cellular telephone towers. But it was an Aug. 20 fire at the home of John Stein AB7F that now has alarmed the ham radio community in Vancouver.

The fire marshal's office says Stein's amateur radio tower was apparently targeted. It believes the fire was set at the base and spread upward along the feed line. Flames fell from the melting cables and spread to Stein's home.

Fortunately, authorities say, Stein was awake when the fire broke out about 11:30 p.m., got out, called 9-1-1 and tried to get a start on putting the fire with a garden hose. But the fire took off quickly and, unfortunately, the home sustained extensive damage in excess of $50,000.

The fire marshal's office says Stein told them he spotted somone running away from his home and he gave them a description. Clark County Deputy Fire Marshal John Dunaway is leading the investigation into the communication tower fires.

At this point, the fire marshal's office will confirm basic details about the fires. But the fire marshal's office says there is certain information it cannot release at this time because it doesn't want to jeopardize the case it hopes to eventually bring against the arsonist.

Stein's home was not far from the fires at the other communications towers, the most spectacular of them on a more than 200-foot tall tower in Vancouver. That's shared by the Washington State Patrol and the Washington State Department of Transportation headquarters.

Officials say while the state patrol's communications in Clark County were disrupted by the fire, 9-1-1 communications were not affected. Damage in that fire was estimated at more than $100,000.

That blaze prompted the $10,000 reward offer from a foundation. Ham operators in the Vancouver area are very concerned and fear anyone with a tower could become the next victim. They've been transmitting word about what's been happening via repeater, HF radio and the internet across the region. They're urging hams with towers to be especially vigilant and take precautions to protect their feedlines, but more importantly their homes and their lives.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Mark Abramowicz, NT3V, in Philadelphia.

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There is general agreement that this anti radio fire bug has to be stopped before someone to loose their life in one of his blazes. If any one has information regarding these fires or the person setting them please call the Crime Information Tip Line at 877 - 274 - 6311 or the Clark County Washington Fire Marshal's Office at area code 360 - 397 - 2186 and ask for extension 3396. You may remain anonymous on either line. (ARNewsline ™, CGC, others)

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ENFORCEMENT: FCC WARNS NEIGHBOR OF HAM OVER INTERFERENCE

A neighbor of a ham radio operator who refuses to clean up

interference he is causing could now face a stiff fine. The FCC'as
Daryl Duckworth, NN0W, says that the agency is giving the neighbor one last chance to comply:

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Duckworth: "A follow-up warning letter went to a resident in Friendwood, Texas, concerning interference to William Cooper, W5ZAF, from a battery charger. The amateur had supplied ferrite beads earlier to the resident which did solve the problem. Evidently, the resident changed his mind and tossed the ferrites back over the fence."

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The FCC says that if the interference is not corrected by September 15th, it will have its Field Office investigate the matter and possibly issue the uncooperative neighbor a hefty fine. It also suggested that he consult an attorney regarding the FCC rules that control radiation from unlicensed devices like the battery charger that's causing the problem to the ham next door. (FCC, RAIN)

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THE BPL FIGHT: ARRL ASKS FCC TO CLOSE DOWN AZ. BPL TEST

Some important developments on the B-P-L front. First to Arizona where the ARRL is calling on the FCC to immediately shut down a Broadband Over Powerline field trial in the Cottonwood. This, because it's causing severe interference to Amateur Radio communication in the area.

The ARRL Letter says that Electric Broadband LLC and utility A-P-S have been operating the B-P-L experiment at two sites since June under a Special Temporary Authorization the FCC granted Electric Broadband in March. Michael Kinney, KU7W, filed the first Amateur Radio complaint in June. It cited testing by the Verde Valley Amateur Radio Association in the 1.8-30 MHz range to show that B-P-L interference made attempts at ham radio communication useless. The interference on typical Amateur Radio equipment shows received undesired signal levels in excess of 60 dB over S9.

According to the ARRL, both the utility and Electric Broadband were contacted, and no response was received. The ARRL says that both companies are aware that the B-P-L field trial has been causing

harmful interference and neither has taken any steps to either resolve it or terminate the test. (ARRL)

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THE BPL FIGHT: BAD NEWS FROM DOWN UNDER

Meantime, Broadband Over Powerline and its introduction in Australia has that nations hams on the alert. This, because little has been known about what has been occurring behind the scenes as power companies prepare to adopt the B-P-L technology and the Australian Communications Agency considers rules to govern it. Now, WIA Newsman Jim Linton, V-K-3-P-C has uncovered an almost terrifying development. One that could mean the end of H-F operations down-under for many V-K hams.

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The future introduction of Broadband Powerline Communications (BPL) in Australia could be on the condition that "less significant" HF radio users such as radio amateurs and four wheel driver clubs would not be protected from any interference it causes.

The Australian power industry has a real concern about the added expense required to address interference that could affect amateur radio stations and other recreational radio users. Its arguments include that to remove amateur radio frequencies from a BPL system will add cost and reduce the capacity and potential data rate. The power industry is requesting that the Australian Communications Authority (ACA) outweigh the concerns of recreational or "less significant" HF radio users with the higher community benefit of providing greater access to broadband-enabling technology.

The ACA, in response to the power industry concerns, is now examining the legal possibility of allowing BPL networks to cause substantial interference to "less significant" radio services, while other radio services would continue to be entitled to interference protection. Presumably if this becomes reality the Amateur Service could lose its protection against harmful powerline interference too. After all, were are in the eyes of some just a "less significant" radio service.

This has been Jim Linton VK3PC for WIA National News.

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If this does happen it could mean a lot fewer V-K callsigns will be heard on the Hiugh Frequency and low VHF bands. (WIA News)

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Break 1

>From the United States of America, We are the Amateur Radio Newsline, heard on bulletin stations around the world including the repeaters of the Rocky Mountain Radio League serving Denver and Bloomfield, Colorado.

(5 sec pause here)

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RESTRUCTURING: ARRL PROPOSES BANDWIDTH DEFINED HAM SERVICE

The ARRL has released a synopsis of its petition to the FCC aimed at restructuring the Amateur service along bandwidth defined lines. While what has been made public is highly abreviated, a drafted, the ARRL's bandwidth petition would preserve double-sideband AM and would stop short of opening the phone bands to digital and other modes of the same bandwidth.

The ARRL's petition also proposes to limit bandwidth in the CW subbands to 200 Hz, which also will accommodate data modes such as PSK31. It also suggests to limit bandwidth in the existing "RTTY/data subbands" to either 500 Hz or 3 kHz, with phone emissions specifically prohibited in certain subbands where 3 kHz would be permitted.

Obviously this will be an ongoing story. More on this next week as reaction comers in. (ARRL)

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HAM RADIO IN SPACE: HURRICANE CHARLEY WRECKS AMSAT LAB

Hurricane Charlie has also taken its toll on the Amateur Radio space program. This, with word that the storm destroyed the building housing the lab used to assemble the latest series of ham radio

satellites.

Hurricane Charlie hit Orlando, Florida at about 8 p m Eastern on Friday, August 13th packing sustained winds estimated at close to 100 miles per hour. One of the places sustaining damage was Orlando Executive Airport. This was home of the AMSAT Laboratory. The place where ham radio satellites have been assembled and tested prior to launch.

Rick Hambly, W2GPS, reports that AMSAT members in the area survived with relatively minor damage but the building that houses that AMSAT Lab suffered severe structural damage from Charley's onslaught. It
has now been condemned and will have to be torn down.

W2GPS says that the equipment and parts inventory at the lab are in good shape but AMSAT was given less than two weeks to move out and find temporary storage for its equipment. The Amateur Radio space agency also must begin a search for a new building to support development of the Eagle ham radio satellite and future projects.

Complicating matters is that AMSAT's insurance does not cover the costs of temporary storage or of moving to a new facility. So, they are asking the Amateur Radio community to keep ham radio space projects alive by sending a donation to AMSAT's Hurricane Fund. Hambly says that the money collected will be used to get the lab back in operation as soon as possible.

AMSAT North America is a federally charted 501(c)(3)not for profit organization. Any donation should be tax deductible in the United States. Information on the fund and how to donate is in cyberspace at www.amsat.org. (AMSAT-NA, W2GPS, W5DID)

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RESCUE RADIO: RADIO STATIONS GET PRAISE IN CHARLEY AFTERMATH

Broadcasters in Florida have been getting involved as the clean-up following Hurricane Charley. One has taken on being the voice of the storm ravaged area.

According to the CGC Communicator, FM radio station Seaview-104.9 in Punta Gorda, Florida and four of its sister stations are all owned by Clear Channel Communications. Seaview-104.9's studios were damaged and the station was knocked off the air by Hurricane Charley, but service was restored within hours. According to a report in the St. Petersburg Times, once the storm had passed, General Manager Mike Moody returned to the building housing his station. The roof was shredded and the ceiling collapsed. But one studio, no bigger than a

walk-in closet, was in working order.

Moody said that there was no power but using a generator he got the studio on the air. He also found a phone outlet reserved for a FAX machine operating so he plugged in a phone, put the receiver to the microphone and then let callers unravel their tales of storm survival.

The studio is the only one based in Charlotte County. Because of this it has become a lifeline for residents searching for information to help them cope with the storm's aftermath and listeners like Ron Hall, KP2N, have rallied around the station in support of its vital post storm activities. (CGC)

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RESCUE RADIO: UK GROUP ACTIVATES FOR FLOODS

Meantime, over in the U-K, a ham radio emergency communications unit was activated. This, after severe rains caused flooding near the town of Boscastle. Jeramy Boot, G4NJH, is in Nottingham with more:

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Cornwall Raynet Groups were put on standby by their Emergency Planning Unit on the evening of Monday, 16th August, following communications difficulties resulting from the massive flooding at Boscastle. Eleven volunteers were available to proceed to the emergency, but were stood down later as the communications difficulties had been resolved.

Jeramy Boot, G4NJH

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For those not aware, RASYNET is the U-K equivalent of ARES and RACES here in the U-S-A. (GB2RS)

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HAM RADIO ON THE NET: MORE CHANGES AT QRZ.COM

More changes have come to the QRZ.com super site. This, as its owner

Fred Lloyd, AA7BQ, announces some policy changes regarding the callsigns that are listed in the QRZ Callsign database.

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According to QRZ's Lloyd, the site will no longer accept callsign designators, prefixed or suffixed, as independent callsigns. This would include reciprocal calls such G 3 slash K6PZW -- a call I might be assigned if I were visiting England.

Lloyd says that these listings were problematic for both the QRZ website and the QRZ CD ROM, and they were of questionable value to begin with. As of the latest software update, the server will no longer accept or record such entries. The logic is that anybody wanting to contact the callsign holder could just as easily look them up by their primary callsign.

Also gone will be non ham call signs such as those self issued by individual SWL's, Weather watchers, and others. Lloyd says that Q-R-
Zed will continue to accept SWL listings as long as they are issued by a formal body, and so long as they have an alphanumeric format. But Lloyd says that an SWL callsign cannot be a primary login account name to a website that manages amateur radio callsigns.

The bottom line: Non-amateur callsigns will continue to be excluded from the QRZ CD ROM and will take last priority with server management resource. In other words, they will be listed on a time and space available basis, only.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Bruce Tennant, K6PZW, reporting.

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These changes are in addition to the posting policy changes that Lloyd announced two weeks ago. (QRZ.com)

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RADIO LAW: SENATE WARNING ON CABLE RATES

The Senate says that it will consider new regulations for cable television unless the industry addresses soaring prices and allows consumers more channel choices. Members of the Senate Commerce

Committee said pressure from angry constituents is leading them to look at ways to hold down cable rates and let subscribers choose individual channels rather than packages set by operators.

Since Congress deregulated the industry in 1996, cable rates have increased by 53 percent while inflation has risen 19 percent. Cable operators said the jump reflected higher programming costs, more channels and system improvements such as rewiring to provide digital TV. (Published reports)

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RADIO LAW: BETTER CELLULAR SERVICE

The government says wireless companies are doing a better job of switching customers who want to keep their cell phone number. In the first month after the change took effect, the Federal Communications Commission received 24-hundred complaints. Most were from people who said the transfers were taking too long. In the past month, the number of complaints has fallen to 400. Customers have had the option of keeping their phone numbers when they switch to a new carrier since November. (Science OnLine)

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EMERGING TECHNOLOGY: PERSONALIZED PHONE MUSIC SERVICE FROM SONY

Meantime Sony Corporation has announced what it called the first personalized radio service for mobile phones. Under the still-unnamed music streaming service, subscribers would not own any of the songs but could create a customized channel to listen to the music they want, storing favorite tunes in personal playlists. Users would also be able to listen to music from a collection of predefined channels. A "smart personalization" feature could also keep track of the subscriber's music preferences and make song suggestions. (Sony)

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THE SOCIAL CIRCUIT: TENNESSEE IN AUGUST

Turning to the ham radio social calendar, word that Tennessee's Short Mountain Repeater Club will be sponsoring the Cedars of Lebanon Hamfest on August 28th. This, at the Gladville Community Center in the town of Gladville Look for vendors, a large tail gate sales area

and lots more. For more information e-mail keharris@netc.com or take your web browser to www.qsl.net/smrc (E-mail)

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THE SOCIAL SCENE: LIGHTHOUSES OF AUSTRALIA 2004 ANNUAL DINNER WEEKEND

And if you want to travel a bit, this year's Lighthouses of Australia Dinner will be held in Launceston, Tasmania on Saturday, October 2d. The event will include a trip to the National Archives Office Touring Exhibition on Australian Lighthouses known as "Beacons by the Sea." It will also include visits to the Low Head Light and the Pilot Station Maritime Museum also at Low Head the same weekend. (GB2RS)

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THE SOCIAL CIRCUIT: GERMAN VHF CONVENTION HAS NEW DATE

And from Europe word that Germany's Weinheim VHF Convention, which had originally been scheduled for August 28th and 29th will now take place on 11th and 12th of September. The new venue is Bensheim which is 10 kilometers north of Weinheim. Full details are on the web at www.ukwtagung.de (DARC)

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BREAK 2

This is ham radio news for today's radio amateur. From the United States of America, We are the Amateur Radio Newsline with links to the world from our only official website at www.arnewsline.org and being relayed by the volunteer services of the following radio amateur:

(5 sec pause here)

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WORLDBEAT: CB SPECTRUM SHARING IN THE UK

There may soon be some new sounds on 27 MHz C-B in the United Kingdom, and they won't be saying 10-4 Good Buddy. In fact they may
be very formal sounding. This, as British telecommunications regulator Ofcom proposes to allow local religious and community organizations to operate one-way low power broadcast stations within the U-K Citizens' Band allocation. Our producer, Bill Pasternak, WA6ITF, has more:

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No. Its not a joke. And Great Britain's Office of Communications --
Ofcom -- says that this is how the new shared C-B service will work.

At first a small number of organizations will be licensed to transmit religious services in a limited number of pilot areas. These would be called Community Audio Distribution Systems or C-A-D-S. Their specific purpose will be to allow house-bound religious congregation members -- people unable to travel to a house of worship but who wish to hear local religious community services -- the ability to do so.

If proven effective, Community Audio Distribution Systems would be expanded as a short-range and inexpensive wireless public address systems. The U-K radio regulator says evidence of demand for such arrangements has arisen primarily from within religious communities and this is where Ofcom expects the majority of use to be. But its not making this a religious-only radio service. In fact it is encouraging other community groups could also use the system for other similar purposes.

To test these plans, Ofcom is proposing a closely monitored year-long pilot program in the areas where interest has been most widespread and sustained. This includes West Yorkshire in England and all of Northern Ireland. In those regions C-A-D-S users will share spectrum with the Citizens' Band users in a way that Ofcom says will provide the flexibility required to transmit religious and community service material while protecting other spectrum users from harmful interference. At least it will try its best to do so.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Bill Pasternak, WA6ITF, reporting.

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Can something similar happen here in the U-S-A. Not likely. At least not very soon. C-B is still to crowded, unruly and

unstructured a band to effectively share. But it is expected that other administrations world-wide will be watching this United Kingdom C-B sharing experiment with an eye to introducing similar services in their nations as well. (RSGB)

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WORLDBEAT: BIG VHF TECH SYMPOSIUM DOWN-UNDER

The Wireless Institute of Australia's Central Region is holding a Technical Symposium Saturday October 2nd. Rex Moncur VK7MO will discuss Digital enhancement of VHF signals, Doug Mc Arthur VK3UM EME Techniques, Joe Kasser VK5WU Computers for Amateur Radio and David Giles VK5DG will explain that Amateur Satellites are really only high tech repeaters on orbit. The venue is the Modbury Heights School with talk-in on 148.850 MHz. (WIA News)

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HAM RADIO IN SPACE: INDIA'S HAMSAT READIED FOR LAUNCH

A Dutch student is helping India put its first Amateur Radio satellite in orbit. Willian Lijenaar, who has graduated as an electronics engineer, has provided a transponder to the satellite.

According to the W-I-A News, the Indian project is called HamSat and is scheduled for launch in four or five months. Reportedly, the coordinator of HamSat had asked the young Dutch engineer to design and build the transponder. Along with Lijenaar's unit an Indian built transponder will be part of new bird as well. (WIA News)

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RADIO SCIENCE: NASA TO SAVE HUBBLE

NASA has decided to try to save the orbiting Hubble Space Telescope. Possibly by sending a Canadian made robot to fix it.

Nasa Administrator Sean O'Keefe told researchers at the agency's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland about the plan. He also has instructed engineers to begin work to put the robotic mission into orbit by 2007. (NASA)

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DXCC: SOMALIA NOW ACREDITED

Some good news for D-Xers. Effective immediately, the ARRL DXCC Branch will accept QSL cards for operations taking place in Somalia using the 6O / T5 prefix and suffix. This includes the Somaliland which is north-western Somalia and Puntland in north-eastern Somalia. These are autonomous areas but will be accepted along with the southern and central areas of that nation.

The DXCC will also accredit operations possessing written permission from any recognized authority that is acknowledged to be in control of a particular region of Somalia. All cards will count for the Somali Democratic Republic. And says the DXCC, QSL's for past operations will be accepted where proper documentation has been submitted.

Of coarse this is subject to change based on future developments in Somalia. We quill have more D-X news a bit later on. (ARRL, GB2RS)

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DX

In D-X, word that Kris Partridge, G8AUU, is working in Baghdad and has received the callsign YI9AU. Kris is reported to be active on the High Frequency bands using 100 watts to a long wire but hopes to improve his antennas soon. He is also hoping to become active on Echolink and says that he be in Iraq until early or mid-September.

And G0JMU is again active from Malawi as 7Q7HB. Reports say that he will be there until at least the 22nd of September.

Also, news that 5B4AFM will operate as J42004A from Skopelos and Athens through the 1st September. The island of Skopelos counts as EU-072 for the RSGB Islands on the Air award program.

Lastly listen for the Cook Islands to be on 6 meters with a better signal in coming weeks. This as KC5YKX reports over the VHF Reflector that he has shipped a 5 element beam there for ZK1CG to use. ZK1CG should be on the Magic Band as soon as the antenna arrives. QSL all of these operators in these stories as directed on the air.

(All aboveDX from various DX sources)

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THAT FINAL ITEM: ECHO - THE TONE ACCESS HAM RADIO SATELLITE

And finally this week a rhetorical question. Why use continuous tone coded squelch access to talk through a ham radio satellite? AMSAT says that there are several very good reasons and Amateur Radio Newsline's Norm Seeley, KI7UP, has them in this report:

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Continuous tone coded squelch is better known in ham radio circles under its Motorola trade name of P-L or Private Line. And AMSAT says that there are several good reasons to use it on the new Echo ham radio satellite.

First, and simply, is on orbit power management. The ability to minimize the amount of power used by the satellite.

Recent data collection shows that on average, Echo's tone access FM repeater transponder is on for less than 40% of an orbit. There are orbits where that number is as high as 65%, but the average is below 40%. That means the satellite is conserving over 60% of the power that would have been consumed by the transmitter if it were being keyed up by every random signal passing through its receiver. Since you cannot easily change rechargeable batteries on a satellite like you can on a terrestrial H-T, power management is crucial to the long term stability of Echo or any man made satellite.

The second reason kind of tag's onto the first. Its the idea of minimizing the three letters dreaded by hams world wide: Q-R-M.

In the tone access mode Echo does not have to listen to other traffic on the Amateur bands or any other signal not intended for the satellite to relay. While the satellite still has to compete with these R-F sources to capture the receiver, they are not retransmitted downlink. This means you do not have to listen to taxi cabs being dispatched in some third-world nations where the V-H-F Amateur bands have more business going on than ham radio contacts being made. A problem that the world wide Intruder Watch program has been fighting for years.

Yet another reason for tone access on Echo. By closing the audio

path when no access tone is present the ground based user hears a short unmodulated carrier for the duration of the squelch tail. This can be used as a good measure of how well you are actually hearing the satellite.

Without tone access filtering, uplink band noise is heard. And, any ham who has heard a carrier access repeater where the squelch is open knows what that sounds like. Amplified noise that is sometimes difficult to differentiate from the actual band noise. In the case of a ham radio satellite it means not knowing if you are hearing the bird at all.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Norm Seeley, KI7UP, in Scottsdale, Arizona.

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After Echo's launch there was talk on some terrestrial repeaters that
AMSAT had put a private P-L repeater in space. This is far from the case. Without tone access, the lifespan of Echo would be significantly reduced and fewer hams would have their chance to make contacts through it. (ANS)

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NEWSCAST CLOSE

With thanks to Alan Labs, AMSAT, the ARRL, the CGC Communicator, CQ Magazine, the FCC, the Ohio Penn DX Bulletin, Radio Netherlands, Rain, the RSGB and Australia's W-I-A News, that's all from the Amateur Radio Newsline(tm). Our e-mail address is newsline @arnewsline.org. More information is available at Amateur Radio Newsline's(tm) only official website located at www.arnewsline.org. You can also write to us or support us at Amateur Radio Newsline(tm), P.O. Box 660937, Arcadia, California 91066.

For now, with Bill Pasternak, WA6ITF, at the editors desk, I'm Don
Wilbanks, AE5DW, saying 73 and we thank you for listening." Amateur Radio Newsline(tm) is Copyright 2004. All rights reserved.